

The process disclosed in Wood '277 is concerned with a barreling process and it does not disclose the specific features set forth in claim 1, as now amended. Hashimoto '770 is concerned with improving the surface of a workpiece by numerous known methods of vibrating finishes specified at column 2, lines 8 to 13. The Applicants' method has an optimal time of 30 minutes, which is clearly below the time that is considered to be optimal by Hashimoto '770.


Additionally, the process in Hashimoto '770 is solely concerned with surface roughness. The improvement in compressive stress and fatigue life specified in the Applicants' invention is a surprising result and one that is not predictable from the teachings of Hashimoto '770 to one skilled in the art.

As independent claim 1 is patently distinguishable from the prior art references, the remaining claims dependent therefrom are also patently distinguishable.

In view of the foregoing, it is believed that the amended claims and the claims dependent there from are in proper form. The Applicants respectfully contend that the teachings of Hashimoto '770 and Wood '277 do not anticipate the claimed invention under the provisions of 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) nor do they establish a *prima facie* case of obviousness under the provisions of 35 U.S.C. §103(a). Thus, claims 1-4 and 11-16 are considered to be patently distinguishable over the prior art of record.

The application is now considered to be in condition for allowance, and an early indication of same is earnestly solicited.

Respectfully submitted,

  
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The following claims have been cancelled without prejudice or disclaimer:

Claims 2, 13 and 14 have been cancelled.

Claim 1 has been amended as follows:

- 1 1. (Twice Amended) [Use of] A method of using non-corrosive hard particle abrasion
- 2 to treat a rolling element bearing component, the hard particle abrasion including the steps of:
- 3 immersing the bearing component in a receptacle containing hard particles; and
- 4 agitating the bearing component and/or hard particles to produce relative movement
- 5 therebetween, the hard particle abrasion being performed for between 10 minutes and 1 hour,
- 6 preferably 30 minutes, [and] to improve the surface topography of the component to increase
- 7 the compressive stress in the surface of the component by between 200 mPa and 500 mPa and
- 8 to enhance the rolling contact fatigue life of the component by at least 12 times.

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